

February 24, 2016

Dear Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischman and Members of the Education Committee,

I am the Executive Director of the Riverfront Children's Center located in Groton. I would like to submit testimony regarding Bill 5306. Riverfront has been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) since 1996. As a state funded agency, we are required to be accredited so that we are able to receive funds. Going through the accreditation process and maintaining it can be costly to childcare programs.

I would ask that prior to making changes to the Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP) you would consider a few things. This program has been instrumental in helping programs throughout the state become accredited and therefore, increasing the quality for children. As a state, we rank in the top five states in the country to more childcare programs accredited per capita. For a state as small as ours to rank so high makes a huge statement on how we feel and are committed to quality early care and education.

When a program decides they would like to become accredited and/or a center is near their reaccreditation, they are able to apply to be a part of AFP. There are a lot of questions asked regarding what you know about the accreditation process, the population you serve, what you are working on as a program, how you communicate the process to families and get them involved etc. Applications are then reviewed by a panel who then decide if programs have fulfilled all the requirements needed to be part of the program.

Through AFP, programs not only receive monetary assistance in order to afford the accreditation process, but the most critical support needed in going through the process. Accreditation can be overwhelming for not only the directors, but the teachers and families as well. Having a support system as you go through the process that allows you to discuss the difficulties you may be experiencing and/or changes that you want to make is priceless. AFP facilitators are able to connect programs during the process allowing these relationships to develop. Some of these connections happen during the several training opportunities offered to teachers throughout the year. There is nothing better than having someone to cheer you on or to be the shoulder to cry on during stressful moments.

This program is truly a gift to all childcare programs and families. The programs that go through this process are quite diverse. This allows families to have true quality choices when deciding where their child will attend a program. I truly believe that by changing the process for AFP will likely leave programs to make the decision to not renew accreditation and/or start the process. This would mean possibly losing programs that are accredited due to cost and our ability to assess their continued quality. Therefore, affecting children and families.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my concerns.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Dole

The Riverfront Children's Center, Inc
476 Thames Street

Groton, CT 06340